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THE SCHOOL OF LIFE.—BY ANNA MARY HOWITT.

CHAPTER V.

"Throw away Thy rod,
 Throw away Thy wrath,
 O my God!
 Take the gentle path,
 O let wrath remove,
 Love will do the deed;
 For with love
 Stony hearts will bleed."—*George Herbert.*

"In every word there is a magical influence, each word being the breath of the internal, moving spirit. Where is he who is proof either against words of blessing or of curse?"—*Dr. Ennemoser's "History of Magic."*

MRS. ELLIS STAMBOYSE and her sister, and good, bustling Mrs. Strudwicke were marvellously busy with the heaping up of rich bridecake in a silver basket, with gossip, and with preparation of the drawing-rooms for the reception of wedding visitors, during the hour that Leonard, with hurried footsteps but lagging heart, hastened out of the town in the direction of the asylum. The sunshine gleamed upon its many windows, as he neared the house of woe. A clear blue sky circled over it, and a flight of pigeons, with wings gleaming as the wings of angels, soared up in whirling flights above its red prison-roofs. Leonard's eyes noticed every thing, every grass-blade tipped with rime, which nodded along his pathway; every fleecy pile of cloud which rolled through the azure heaven. And now he was waiting in a small sitting-room, where the patients received their friends. With the same dull, mechanical perception, Leonard here noticed the cards stuck in the frame of a ground-plan of the establishment hung above the mantelpiece, and also he noticed that the fire-irons were chained to the stove, and that the window was very high and closed in with bars.

And then the door opened, and mechanically turning round, he saw, whilst a great trembling seized his soul—that his mother entered. Except that she was so very thin, and a certain mist hung within her restless eyes, he felt no change in her as she approached him—for she looked but little older, and had always, in years past, a certain wildness in her dress. But it was as a stranger that she addressed her son. This cut poor Leonard, as with a sharp knife, to the very bone. He, it was he, whose features were convulsed with emotion.

"You have done me the honour, sir, of calling upon me—pray be seated," said the poor mother, waving her hand with a strange grace towards a chair. "Visitors are unfrequent now in the world—but I do not wonder that they should not come HERE to see me, though I am the widow, sir, of Augustus Mordant—the poet's widow—for there are sad and terrible things done here. Had my son lived, sir; but, we won't talk about THAT—he was murdered—MURDERED—MURDERED!" and hoarsely muttering to herself the terrible word, she sunk upon the floor oblivious to all but her anguish, and her frame quivered, as if she were seized with ague.

"Mother, dear—he is here!" said the stifled voice of Leonard, and he pressed his white lips to her poor thin hands; "I am your Leonard, only look at me, mother." But springing up like a tigress, the heart-broken mother seized her son fiercely by the shoulders, and with flashing eyes uttered a wild yell—"You—you my son! YOU are his murderer!" The door flew open—a tall man seized upon Mrs. Mordant, and holding her poor hands tightly in his grasp, motioned with his head for Leonard to retire.

Leonard waited no longer; the last drop of misery was added to his cup, and in truth it flowed over. Pacing up and down the hilly fields around the asylum might Leonard have been seen during the whole of that day—he seemed unable to tear himself away from this place of woe—such a mighty pity for that suffering soul, swallowed his own misery. Doubts of all that is holiest at times assailed him—bitterest scorn of his own impotence stung him—all anchorage seemed lost for his soul. To have believed in utter annihilation after death, and to have sunk into a dull oblivion, was all that he desired. The beauty, the perfection, the cheerfulness of nature seemed

a cruel mockery of man. No oasis showed itself in the desert of his life—yet, as in the house of death, the mourners rise up and lie down, partake of meat and drink, and take heed of the morrow—so did the body of Leonard mechanically pursue its course, whilst the soul lay dead. Back to London went the body, re-entered the dingy lodgings, and recommenced a dull, soulless existence—ambition had vanished—hope—love; he never asked himself whether they would any day return.

Leonard sternly refused all intercourse with his acquaintance, and changed his lodging, desiring to be lost in the great vortex of London. Much astonishment did his sudden disappearance after his triumph occasion among the academy students and the professors, and especially in good Lambelli's heart. But in London the greatest wonder only remains a wonder its proverbial length of time—nine days. "He was always a queer fellow, was Hale, he'll be turning up again some of these days, never fear," was the consoling reference to the wonderments of his acquaintance.

Lucretia Gaywood, however, could not so easily be silenced. Leonard, on his return, was too unobservant of external things to notice an air of freshness and of order which reigned in his room,—that all his book had been dusted and arranged; that all his brushes had been beautifully washed, and his paint-box put into nicest order; that sketches, tumbling about, had been cleaned and laid together,—that a fresh cloth was laid upon his table, of a beautiful dull crimson; and that various rents and rags had disappeared from the hearth-rug. Neither did he notice that a new black tin coffee-pot stood on the accustomed spot of a leaky old one, which, for several years, had been a comforting friend of his. Alas! grief, which so often renders the kindest of hearts unkind, had rendered him blind to the ministration of two bright angels, who, during the days of his absence, had worked with busy fingers and sorrowing hearts for him—the angels Lucretia and her little sister Mary.

A great crisis had arrived in the life of Leonard,—he was suddenly become the grave and fully developed man, treading the path of earthly sorrow which our Blessed Lord deigned to tread,—our poor hero had become in due time "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Gradually through that dull time loomed forth the truth of many things—and with truth a certain hope. "Knowing what pain is, having involuntarily caused a pain unutterable, if there be a God of love and mercy, may that God avert from me the bitter curse of further increase of pain—may my life become not a curse—but each day, each hour exist innocuous, if not blessed, through the power of creating joy," thought unceasingly the soul of Leonard. Unceasing ponderings upon these things absorbed his spirit; the seeds of the peculiar nursery of his own and his parents miserable fate, he traced down to their earliest source, seeking with prayers and an agony as of "bloody sweat," to disentangle the mournful skein of their lives.

The only remaining motive of his soul, during those long months was a stern resolve to avoid causing a pain or injustice towards any human being, and this alone impelled Leonard to exertion. In order, honestly to pay for the slender requirements of his life, he unceasing made the description of designs for the publisher whom we have already mentioned. To begin any great work of imagination seemed to him a mockery

—the glory of his earlier aspirations was gone, and he remembered his fervour of but a few months back with a sort of pity. How long this frame of mind might have continued, had Leonard been left undisturbed in this strange and brooding life, we know not. But the seeds of earnestness having been sown by the angel of Pain in his soul, now came the angel of Pity to call them into life by her warm smiles, and by her tears of sympathy.

Leonard was drawing, as usual, one April afternoon, with a dull monotony of hand, and with his thoughts far away, when suddenly once again the angelic vision stood in his room.

"You must pardon our intrusion," said Lucretia's mild voice, "but we have been very anxious about you, and Andrew has insisted upon our disturbing you. We have brought you a little bit of nature, Mr. Hale, to tempt you to come out with us and see what pleasant things are going on in the world, which we are all of us apt to forget. Where is it, dear Mary?" And Mary, a girl of fifteen, with the most modest of deep hazel eyes, brought up from beneath the soft folds of her cloak a rustic basket brimful of clusters of the freshest primroses, and bright gleaming arum leaves, and dark-green dog's merny, and ivy trails, with bushes of violets here and there peeping out of moss.

"How very beautiful! Miss Gaywood," exclaimed Leonard, with such an expression of pleasure in his voice and in his whole countenance as had not been there for many a long month; "and what a kind, gentle thought of yours—beautiful as the flowers themselves!"

"Oh, it is not our thought," said Mary, speaking for the first time, and a bright colour spreading over her face, till she looked almost beautiful; "it was Andrew's thought, yesterday, when we were all together down in those beautiful Esher woods—how beautiful they are!—and the birds singing like mad, and Lucretia repeating her favourite lines of Mordant's about the summer grass, we all at once exclaimed how much we wished indeed that you could have been with us,—for Andrew always connects you with thoughts of flowers, and moss, and ivy; and he said, 'Take him some flowers, and try to persuade him to come here—to these Esher woods I mean.' And so, this morning, after we had been with Andrew to the coach, and bade him good-by, we came over here."

As the bright young girl spoke, the dull mist over Leonard's soul was withdrawn for a space, and rays of celestial light fell with a warmth upon him. But he remained quite silent, and there was almost an unresponsively cold look on his face.

"We were so sanguine," resumed Lucretia, "as to believe that, together with these flowers, our words might avail some little with you, and that you might be prevailed upon to take some change. I know myself so well the deadening effect of these London rooms, and especially the reluctance that grows upon one living alone, to break through the charmed circle of solitude, the influence of which grows upon one with the strength of an enchanter's spell. I wonder whether you would ever so far break this spell, as to come out to us at Kentish-town; we've no Esher woods there, nor anything even to be properly called a garden—not what we country folks, Mr. Hale, should call a garden—but we have quiet, and a few trees, and beautiful sunsets from our sitting-room window, and we are near to really lovely strolls at Highgate; and, above all, we have a truly hearty welcome for you? Will you believe this, and will you come and test it?" And such truth and purity lay in every accent of the sisters' voices, and in their kind countenances that Leonard, spite of himself, said, "Yes, I will, indeed!"

"You will; that is right and kind! but when—let us fix now?" said Lucretia. "You would not come back now with us, would you? This is a very sudden thought, I grant—and startling perhaps to you; but never mind, the sooner, the more suddenly, the better for such a hermit as you are. If we left you time for consideration of the subject—we never should see you!"

Leonard smiled. "I will return with you now even, if you really invite me!"

"We do! we do!" repeated the sisters. Mary especially

looking greatly pleased. "Meet us," said Lucretia, "in twenty minutes at the corner of Tottenham-court-road. Mary and I have to call at a shop in Oxford-street; and so, until then, good bye." And the sisters were gone.

It was certainly a clever stratagem of the sisters to have thus suddenly taken poor Leonard at his word, and thus arrange this meeting. For no sooner had their bright presence vanished out of the dusky room, than our hero repented him of his promise. The remembrance of his worn clothes rose up with an importance which they never before had had in his eyes—the pain ever in his soul, seemed to return with a bitter violence, as if to reproach him; thus even for a few moments he had enjoyed respite from its gnawing tooth. But the fresh odour from the primroses and violets rose up towards him with the vernal gentleness of the sisters' voices, and their mild eyes seemed full of reproaches. "They are too pure to trouble themselves about my old coat and hat," thought Leonard, with a smile creeping over his sad face. "What a marvellous world this is, where the sternest griefs can even for a moment be mingled up with such ridiculous trifles."

A respite to Leonard's dull grief came whilst he sat in the tiny little sitting-room of the Gaywoods' cottage at their bright little tea-table. Lucretia pouring out the most fragrant tea; and Mary, bringing forth from a Japan cabinet, much too large for the room, all imaginable dainties from the East and the West—preserved ginger, Guaina jelly, and other delicious condiments and confectionaries. "We have long been wanting a guest of especial honour to enjoy all our dainties," laughed Mary, as she dived still deeper into the cabinet, and bringing forth fresh jars and quaint baskets. "Those good brothers of ours, Thomas and Robert, keep our old cabinet always so full, that we really often propose—don't we Lucretia, dear?—to set up shop with our stores. I fancy I could drive a prosperous trade, if Lucretia would only let me have a stall at the Kentish-town gate, near to the old apple-woman's. Every month, almost, Thomas sends us some beautiful things to look at, or some good things to eat; and Robert, who is in India—poor Robert—"with a sigh"—is quite as bad in cramming our poor little cottage with stuffed birds, wonderful shells, shell-baskets, ivory boxes, and Indian idols. This is the reason why Lucretia and I have to live like a couple of 'Nellys' in an 'Old Curiosity Shop!' But do try some of this beautiful jelly; its colour is lovely, is it not? there always seems to be a tropical sunshine glowing within it;" and Mary floated about like sunshine herself.

But not alone were the dainty foods and marvels of the "curiosity shop"—which, by the bye, extended throughout the whole house, from scullery to attic—the sole entertainments offered by Lucretia and Mary to their guest.

Mary glided like a sunbeam out of the room shortly after the disappearance of the tea-tray—in fact, to "wash-up" the tea-cups down in the most ideal of little kitchens—for the Gaywoods kept but one little maid, and such delicate china cups, the gift of "poor Robert," were never entrusted to any unskilful hands. Lucretia and Leonard fell into discourse, such as Leonard had rarely ever enjoyed, and, contracted as was his acquaintance with women, certainly never before with a woman. Of poetry they talked; of Keats, and Shelley, and the new poet Tennyson as the overture. Then Lucretia's little book-shelves having attracted Leonard's eye, the discovery within it of various periodicals containing fugitive pieces of his father's, all carefully marked by Lucretia's hand, surprised him with a mingled thrill of joy and pain.

"How much," said Lucretia, without looking up from the delicate needle-work at which her fingers were industriously stitching—Lucretia was always seen employed at *idle times*, as she would term them, upon the most delicate of needle-work—needlework which helped out the very slender income of the two sisters—"How much, and how often, I have desired that the poems of your father should some day be collected into a worthy form. Those gems of poetry, scattered as they are through the periodicals of the time, are lost entirely, except to the earnest seeker of his rare genius.

Were I rich, that is a labour of true love in which I would indulge; and I should consider that to unite in one great blessing the scattered fancies of such a mind, would be as benevolent an act as the digging of a well in the desert for the reviving of fainting travellers—and, indeed, the draughts of refreshment to my own spirit which I have quaffed from his poetry, would render such an act but a simple one of earnest gratitude."

"I have frequently desired such a thing myself," said Leonard, with his old mournfulness stealing shadow-like over his face; "and one of my thousand fancies has been to sketch a few designs, suggested by various of the poems. It would truly to me be a labour of love, Miss Gaywood; for, with all my unhappy father's weakness, to me he ever appears surrounded by a wondrous glory of even celestial beauty, and——"

"Is it then possible that *you*,"—suddenly interrupted Lucretia, looking up at Leonard with an almost stern reproach in her tone—"that *you* echo the cruel injustice of the world, and fling a stone against the memory of a man certainly more sinned against than sinning, and that man your *father*. Words such as *his* lips have uttered it were faithless indeed to believe proceeded from any but the most generous, the most noble soul. Oh! Mr. Leonard, let us cultivate an unbounded charity and faith; they alone enable us to pass with joy through the earth. Trust me that, believing in perfection, perfection reveals itself to the believer." Lucretia's usually calm manner was momentarily ruffled, her fingers trembled as she resumed her needlework, and a flush passed over her Madonna-like countenance. "Pardon my warmth," she resumed, with a heavenly sincerity looking forth from soft eyes as they rested upon Leonard's mournful face; "I owe your father too deep a debt of gratitude lightly to hear a shadow of reproach cast upon him, and especially by a son. Whatever strength may be given me to perform the duties of existence—whatever sunshine is cast over Mary's and Andrew's life, and mine—we may in a great measure attribute to your father's influence. Years ago—years before you were born—Mordant was an inmate for one whole summer of our father's house. Our father was the schoolmaster of a village upon the borders of Sherwood Forest. I was quite a little child then, but each word, each look of the poet, remains engraven for ever upon my memory. What a marvellous power did he not possess as the interpreter of nature! With a child's simplicity, with a woman's love, and the knowledge of a philosopher, he unfolded the marvels of beauty and joy contained in every natural object around him. He stretched forth his hand and removed the seal; he opened his lips, and behold, the hieroglyphics of God glowed in living fire before even the eyes of an ignorant child! Each acre of the old forest became an acre of paradise, over which the feet of angels eternally paced, leaving the impress of glory, mystery, and joy, behind them. I was, through his teachings, ever hearing the still, small voice of God in the trees, in the murmur of the waters, in the hum of the bees, in the rustle of the flowers—everywhere I beheld "the Burning Bush," and, removing my sandals, adored, prostrating myself upon the holy ground. And when I tell you that your father's words, and gentleness to man and bird, and beast and worm, sinking into the child's heart, as seeds sown in a willing soil, came up in after years and put forth flowers of still deeper thought and purport, do you not acknowledge that *that* child owes a deep debt of love and gratitude towards the sower of the good seed?"

Lucretia's eyes rested, with warm tears of emotion swimming in them, upon Leonard; but he did not reply, as he sat with a bowed head. "Incomprehensible, Protean nature of the Poet," mused he; "what human being can compute the balance between the good and the evil which thou hast produced?" But it was balm to the wounded soul of the son to recognise the lovely fruit brought forth by his father in one human life at least. And this might be but a single sheaf from a vast harvest.

Mary had returned during Lucretia's unusually excited address; and, sitting upon a low seat at her sister's knee, was

gazing earnestly and silently up into her face. Twilight was stealing into the quaint little room, and no sound for a few seconds was heard but the quick and monotonous click of Lucretia's needle, as, sitting at the window, she still mechanically pursued her work.

Suddenly a cab, laden with luggage, stopped before the gate of the little garden; there was a violent ringing of the bell. A gentleman's face looked inquiringly out, and a child was seen convulsively to cling round his neck. Lucretia and Mary starting suddenly up, cried, as with one voice, "That is not Robert—that cannot be little Cuthbert! No, it is *not* Robert," cried Lucretia, a sudden paleness spreading over her face; and she flew out of the room, and was seen standing beside the cab door; and the gentleman was seen speaking hurriedly, and Lucretia stretched her arms towards the child endeavouring to untwine his little hands, clasped tightly round the gentleman's arm. But the child clasped them ever tighter and tighter, and a sad wail of childlike misery pierced even into the little parlour. Mary, who breathlessly had watched this scene through the window, now also flew to the cab. But no endeavours of the sisters could induce the child to untwine his hands; he fell sobbing upon the breast of the gentleman, who appeared to become more and more impatient. At length he raised the little boy in his arms and bore him, still violently sobbing, into the sitting-room; Lucretia and Mary, with distressed countenances, following hurriedly.

"I regret, ladies, that I cannot stay with this poor little fellow, but it is of vital importance that I start to-night for Scotland; we have already, in seeking you, lost only too much time. Strange, unaccountable, that neither Gaywood's letter nor mine, sent from Marseilles, should have reached you! But Cuthbert!—Cuthbert, my man, these are your aunts—this is your house—be a brave little Cuthbert. These ladies love you very much." And as he spoke, the strong sun-burnt man, with a mother's tenderness, kissed the boy's beautiful curling locks, and even the slender little fingers so intricately clasped round his arm. Lucretia and Mary, their loving faces bathed in tears, sought by every possible means to soothe him and attract his attention; but the boy, staring with large mournful deep violet eyes at them for one moment, uttered a sad cry, and once more buried his face upon the stranger's broad chest.

"It is very painful to resort to force with the poor child," said the gentleman, in a voice of emotion. "Nothing but this severe illness of my poor mother could induce me to leave my poor little companion in such distress, but we *must* release his hands;" and the strong man's hands unclasped the tender fingers of the child; and Lucretia and Mary holding him in their arms, the stranger hurried out of the room, jumped into the cab, and rapidly rolled away.

Little Cuthbert struggled violently, burst from the sisters, and, looking round in wild amaze, caught sight of Leonard, who was gazing at him from the window; he flew to him, clasped Leonard's hands, and imploringly looked up into his face.

"You, you'll take me! They frighten me—you are a good man! They frighten me—Papa—Mr. Rutherton—" and the poor little fellow once more burst out into violent sobbing, and clung to Leonard.

"How very extraordinary!" exclaimed the two sisters, greatly distressed. "What an unaccountable thing, poor, poor little fellow! It must be that he is not used to women; his father wrote us word that almost from his birth he had been little Cuthbert's nurse, and that he feared he would grow up very strangely; he has no mother, poor, poor little fellow!" And they looked at each other, and then at Leonard, with a strange uncertainty.

Leonard, sitting upon a sofa, had taken little Cuthbert on his knee; and the child, flinging his slender arms around his neck, sobbed as though his very heart would break. Leonard made no attempt to soothe him, beyond stroking his soft hair and winding his arms tenderly about him. But a sudden, deep, and marked sympathy, had permeated the souls of the unhappy man and the unhappy child. All remained in deep silence. "May I carry Cuthbert into your garden, Miss Gay-

wood?" at length spoke Leonard. "I fancy, somehow, that that might do him good."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," exclaimed the sisters. "Poor, poor little fellow!"

Leonard bore the child, still weeping, out into the twilight garden. The stars were already peeping forth here and there in a silvery grey sky; and long streaks of orange and violet lay upon the horizon, gleaming through the budding trees. All was hushed, except the distant murmur of the city. Leonard seated himself upon a rustic chair beneath a weeping ash upon the little grass-plot, and pressing the weeping child yet closer to him, began in a low voice to speak of this kind Mr. Rutherton, and of the long voyage, and of his home in India. Gradually the little breast heaved less violently, and the child, listening and becoming spell-bound by the tenderness of the voice, began, with convulsive sobs ever and anon breaking through his replies, to freely talk with his new friend. Leonard's keen sympathy had discovered the key with which to unlock the little heart. Cuthbert's highly excitable and nervous temperament responded to the imaginative nature of Leonard, and the boy's eyes opened with eagerness, and his lips poured forth a stream of hurried words whilst he filled up the pictures of his Indian life, the outline to which had been suggested to him by Leonard. And thus the two sat in long discourse till the large full moon rose shining through the trees, and Leonard felt the little figure shiver as it lay nestling up to his breast—his soul all eagerness about "that beautiful, beautiful day when papa took him out to ride with him on Mr. Langton's beautiful white Zippi—that's the elephant, sir—such a beauty; and, you know, white ones are very rare, even in India; and—" "But you are cold, dear Cuthbert; let us now go in and tell your aunts about all these wonderful and beautiful things," urged his friend. "But—but—they make me feel quite—quite afraid, sir; they are strange—all is strange," whispered the poor child, half weeping, as he crept up to Leonard's ear, and laid, with an indescribable trustiness, his little cheek upon Leonard's shoulder. "Am I not strange, also?" inquired Leonard. "No!" said the child, quite boldly; "I've often seen you in my dreams—you are an old friend quite—they are not; and all you say is so nice, and you love India as I do. I'll always obey you—I know instantly those people I'll obey. I'm very bad and wicked at times; even papa says so: and then, if people don't love me, I wish I was dead, like my beautiful mamma, whom I never knew, but who lies buried beneath the great Banian tree. I wonder, now, whether your mother is dead?—I know, though, she is."

"Let us go into the house," again urged Leonard; and with slow steps towards the house the two friends walked. But Cuthbert, when he approached the door, was not so easily persuaded to enter. "It's so dark, and like a box," he said; "I think it as bad as a ship; now don't you, sir? I sha'n't, I'm sure, like this England—I always dreamed I hated it, and that I was always wishing to go to sleep with my mamma under the great Banian-tree." "But you will like your aunts if you don't like England," remarked Leonard. "Shall I? Do you like them, dear, kind, man? Oh, then, perhaps I shall; only I never had any women about me—papa said always it was a great pity there were no women about me."

Meanwhile, the two poor aunts had been most busy in preparing a bed for the traveller; in having his foreign-looking boxes unpacked, and then in spreading a little repast to tempt the poor child to forget its miseries. Mary had brought out all their Indian dainties, in their native jars and baskets, and arranged them prettily from the table before the sofa; had lighted the candles, and brought up out of the kitchen, as an attraction to the child, a beautiful parroquet which Robert had sent them over a year or two previous, and whose harsh and jarring cry had caused him to be banished, spite of his gorgeous plumage, to the lower regions. Several times had the sisters glided to the garden door; but seeing Leonard and the child quietly seated beneath the weeping ash, they wisely returned, leaving the pair undisturbed.

The child was now more courteous to his aunts, yet still

very shy, and clung with a convulsive grasp to Leonard's arm, sitting beside him upon the sofa, and only choosing to eat such things as he placed upon his plate. But the Indian baskets and jars, and the parroquet especially, reconciled Cuthbert to his new home; and after various lively sallies, the little head sank upon Leonard's breast, and the heavy, swollen eyelids, closed in sleep. It appeared, however, as if in slumber the child's anxiety returned shadowily into his soul; for he clung yet closer to his new friend, and heavy, sob-like sighs heaved his little frame.

Dreading to re-awaken such a sad grief in the little unhappy one, Leonard besought the sisters to leave him reposing within his arms yet a little while. "I fear," said he, "it is growing late, and that I may be intruding; but for the sake of this dear child you will, perhaps, pardon such intrusion. In a half-hour or so, perhaps his sleep will be deeper and calmer."

"Oh, we are only too grateful to you!" cried both the sisters. "But with your permission, Mr. Hale," said Lucretia, "we will now perform our little evening duty; for the reading of the beautiful words of Scripture I need not apologise to you; and we endeavour, for the sake of our little maid, to strictly adhere to time and season. Mary, dear, ring the bell for Margery."

The holy hush of the room, through which Mary's deep earnest, and soulful voice, fell like a quiet blessing as it read:—

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;"

the gentle aspect of the three women, and the warm grasp of the little slumbering mourner, sent a gush of peaceful love through poor Leonard's heart, as though an angel from God had laid upon it his gentle, beneficent, healing hand. And when the three women, kneeling, repeated with a low, deep, fervent murmur, the sublime and tender words of the Lord's Prayer, Leonard sank his face upon the child's head, and bedewed the soft locks with a few trembling, warm tears, such as had not for years gushed up from his soul. It was the sanctification of a fresh chapter in Leonard's life.

It is now a considerable space of time that we must hasten over in our narrative. Leonard became a constant visitor at the Gaywoods' little home, and the affection of little Cuthbert grew the strongest bond between them. The child, spite of a peculiarly affectionate nature, was passionate, most difficult to govern, and of such a sensitive temperament—at times, with an occult sense, as it were, showing itself within him by strange dreams and instincts—that Lucretia trembled for his health, either physical or mental. With Leonard she took earnest and deep council. Her brother Robert wrote, urging that his little son should immediately be placed in some school, where, among boys of his own age, the morbid and unusual developments of the child's nature should be ground off by contact with the realities of life. A public school in the city where his friend Rutherton had been educated, he indicated as the school where, when old enough, Cuthbert should be placed. But Lucretia recoiled from such a training for this peculiar child.

Communicating with Mr. Rutherton during his stay in England, and most earnestly (in an interview she had with him before his return to India) entreating him to influence her brother so far as to defer Cuthbert's entrance into a public school, until at least he had attained the age of twelve, Lucretia obtained a partial compliance with her prayers. Cuthbert should remain under his aunt's roof till he was ten; now he was eight. These two years should be most religiously employed for good, she determined, and many were her earnest conferences on this subject with Leonard, who held such singular sway over the child's mind. And in her schemes, also, for Mary's education, Lucretia took council with her friend. But not alone was Leonard's influence felt over Cuthbert, and in Mary's German lessons, but his whole graceful, poetical, and artistic nature flowed forth from him

in warm and vivifying radiations—a fresh interest in life had awoke within him, and with it a more natural tone of mind. This period of his life was, perhaps, if not the most full of strong joy, the most painless. The purest and noblest friendship bound these friends together, each influencing the other for good. And Lucretia's influence, though of a different nature to his upon Mary, herself, or the child, was even a more vital one. It was a keen moral influence. Lucretia's upright mind, unswayed by specious reasoning, struck directly to the moral heart of a subject. Unceasingly, also, she sought to arouse a spirit of joyful, prayerful activity within poor Leonard, whose misery seemed to have bound him with fetters of listlessness and sloth as regarded all creative labour. She sought to work upon his soul through his moral being. Ambition—fame—never entered into her view of Leonard's career. His affections were the lever by which she sought to raise up his dormant energy.

To her influence, especially, may be attributed Leonard's resolve to spend several years abroad. It was a real sacrifice to Lucretia the loss of his society, but she speeded him forth without one selfish regret. And the cheerful tone of his letters—the eager joy in the great works of great men, who until then had been to him mere words and misty dreams—was a four-fold reward for any pain she herself had endured. It was evident to her, that Leonard's artist soul had ascended into a peculiarly elevated region of thought and feeling.

Two years or more had elapsed from the time of Leonard's departure, when a couple of pictures excited an unusual degree of attention in the exhibition of the Royal Academy. They were hung side by side, and being the works of men whose names were new to the public at large, and each possessing in its way a marked character, were always surrounded by a throng of critics, admirers, and cavillers. The larger of the two pictures contained many figures, and possessed a strangely weird spirit, which instantly arrested the attention. Heavy dim tempest-clouds, with lurid reflections in them, were rolling up athwart a brilliant sunset sky—a sky so translucent, that the eye, penetrating through the jagged fissures of the storm-clouds, felt as though it might pierce to the very gates of heaven. A stretch of ocean, reflecting the dusky shadows of the storm and the dying radiance of the heavens, boiled up against a rocky shore. Upon a promontory, jutting forth into this panting ocean, amid sea-grasses and sea-blossoms, bent and torn by the sudden tempest falling upon the world, lay the dead body of a beautiful and young man. His peaceful white face was turned full towards the sky—a livid shadow falling upon it from the tempestuous clouds. The face was as the face of Christ in its look of a deep love, unutterable; no stamp of pain was upon his mouth or brow, although blood oozed from the breast, staining with clear crimson the broad folds of a white tunic, edged with a deep golden border. The hands had fallen crosswise over the body; the sea-flowers and grasses bent over him, bedewing the poor, beautiful corpse, with their tears. Ravens and doves whirled through the sky in mad grief. Trees upon a distant cliff bowed themselves before the coming sorrow, or stretched forth their huge arms, appealing to heaven with a mighty agony. Not nature alone mourned over the stricken white form, but men also, and women and children. Warriors and sages, of godlike mould, bowed their heads, mourning and pondering over the great misery. One warrior, of especially majestic mien, with a golden shield gleaming as a sun on his broad shoulders, leant upon a huge mallet of iron, and gazed inquiringly, with an enigmatical look in his stern and solemn eyes, upon the face of the slain; whilst another form of yet more godlike proportions, and wrapt in a violet mantle which fell over golden armour, raised his countenance with a sudden and awful joy as the astounding tidings of a far-off future are whispered to him by two ravens, messengers from All-Father, and who, with heavy wings, poised themselves above the silver locks of the sage, which were confined within a circlet of gold.

It was the death of Balder,—the God of Love of the old Scandinavian mythology—gone from the world, where Love and

Justice, and gods and men, and nature, must mourn the death of Balder until his final restoration—when there will be a fresh heaven and a fresh earth, and the great harmony of gods and men shall be born.

The other picture was a striking contrast in composition, subject, and colouring. It simply represented Paul and Virginia within the depths of their tropical forest. It was the embodiment of the most pure, the most virginal love—yet a love of the senses as well as of the soul; it was a burning gleam of perfect joy, yet but a gleam—the intenser the more transient. The very vividness of the flame cast a shadow afar off. Lips pressed to lips—the children stood beneath the dim shadows of the heavy fern-like palm-leaves—scarlet and azure passion-flowers springing up from the mossed earth, clustering and entwining with tight tendrils clasps; whilst moonlight-tinted blossoms of strange fantastic forms, but pure as the brows of angels, gleamed down, drooping from the verdant canopy. The children's arms encircled each other with a clasp tight as that of the passion-flowers. A flush tinted Paul's brow; but Virginia, with her earnest deep eyes, was white as the moonlight blossoms. There seemed a might of love and purity, binding the two together, which must be omnipotent over fate itself; but already the foreboding breath of a hurricane raised the heavy leaves of the palm—already through the tangle of the forest a glimpse of the heavy billows of a tempestuous ocean was caught—and a keen observer read a spasm upon the lips of Paul.

Lucretia, and Mary, and little Cuthbert, as well as the rest of London, often stood before these pictures. Lambelli and Strudwicke, too, and very often Honoria and her friend Agnes Singleton.

"Is it not really glorious, Agnes," said Honoria, with her peculiar swan-like motion, and with her noble eyes beaming with joy, upon one of their visits, "to be the possessor of these two beautiful pictures. How much more glorious, though, to have painted them! I am delighted that John has painted so well, and that this, his first picture exhibited, has done him such credit. It is lovely, only a little too sweet and sentimental to be quite to my taste. John must not grow mawkish. There has been enough painting and writing in the world about that *one* phase of love. Love is universal—this is but its commonest phase. And he still wants boldness and strength too, I feel, in many ways: but there is the true stuff in him. Oh, it is a joy to think that the hand and mind which wrought out this picture have been cultivated and developed instead of being left to harden into dulness in a turnip-field. Thanks, dear father, for your faith in the poor little '*Giotto*!' Yes, it is a great and glorious gift is wealth; for now, besides helping on these two fine young fellows, can I cause you, dearest Agnes, great joy through this extraordinary picture of Balder, as you, through your interpretation of the old myth have caused me great joy. You must always consider this picture to belong as much to you as to me. I feel that it must and will influence you greatly in the writing of the Scandinavian portion of your work on the Universal Faith, of which you were speaking the other night. This is, indeed, conceived in the large and broad spirit after which we aspire. We must know this Leonard Hale, Agnes, whenever he returns to England. I feel that he is one of 'the salt of the earth'—a spirit who will do us all good. And his influence upon John will be good. He possesses especially that largeness of conception which I desire to see John possess. But, come, Agnes, the rooms are beginning to fill; and if I see any silly fools gazing with stupidity written upon their faces, whilst their ignorant tongues dare to cast blame upon this beautiful work of art, I may lose all patience, and utter some unpleasant truth, which would be as galling to the poor wretches as a slap in their silly faces. We will enjoy our pictures, Agnes, for a few quiet days together at the dear Hellings." Saying which, the beautiful Honoria and her friend, the young authoress Agnes Singleton, drove away from the exhibition towards one of the most squalid quarters of London, where Honoria had various beneficent missions to accomplish.

It seemed as though each external success of Leonard brought with it an internal woe. The great epochs of life often strangely repeat themselves; and thus was it with Leonard. The letters from Lucretia, and the newspapers sent by her kind hand announcing her great joy in his picture, and the universal response to its excellence, were followed with a sharp pain, springing from the old root of his misery.

It was at Innsprach that the sad letter reached him. He was on his way from Italy towards Munich, where he proposed to sojourn a few months. His whole soul had sung a hallelujah for days, as he had journeyed across those marvellous Alps. And the tender flowers, and clear green Alpine waters—the dim pine forests, and the sublime mountain crags and jagged pinnacles crowned with eternal snows, glittering in rainbow glory, or veiled with cloud, had bound him with the deepest spell of joy which his soul ever knew; and with the joy came the impulse of creation, as of old. And now quaint Innsprach, as he entered it from the mountain gorges, with the mistiness of twilight gathering over its fantastic towers and roofs, had held forth promise of another rich and quaint feast of enjoyment. At Innsprach also he awaited letters—and of letters at the post-office he found a whole packet—the letters announcing the success—another letter, despatched later, announcing the pain. Glancing over the contents of the earlier letters as he walked back from the post-office to his inn, the last sad epistle remained unopened, till he was sitting, with a combined tea and supper spread before him, in a brightly-lighted *salle* of the great hotel. As he read, his cheek went white as ashes, and a faintness as of death crept over him. Thus ran the letter:—

Kentish Town, June.

Dear Friend,—We have been anxiously waiting news of your receipt of the letters and papers announcing the signal success of your beautiful picture. Of our deep joy in this success I have already spoken. But now I write about something more important still. Your poor mother, dear Leonard, is very ill; and as the powers of her mind seem singularly restored—as so frequently, you know, is the case before the last sublime and awful change takes place—and as she speaks of you with the most yearning affection, we all desire your immediate return. She is in London. All particulars I will, dear friend, communicate when we meet. I need not urge your most immediate return. To my eyes this great change in the poor sufferer is a divine blessing; try, dear friend, so to view it. There are deaths which, we all know, are so much less sad than many a life. I need not assure you that all that our attention and earnest care can do for your poor mother is done. Would that we could send a consoling angel to conduct you hither. With the most earnest sympathy,

Yours ever,

LUCRETIA GAYWOOD.

When Ursula Mordant's son read these words, her sorely tried spirit had passed away from the poor corpse. The mist of madness had been cleared away many days since, leaving the soul a seer, vigilant, and far-seeing even into futurity. Sitting by the pillow of the dying woman, Lucretia had glimpses of a spiritual life so glorious, yet so sublime, both revealed in the flickering of intensest beauty over the dying countenance, and in the scattered words uttered in a voice of soul-thrilling gentleness—that never could she refer to these revelations, even to Leonard, except by hint, and then it was with a great shuddering of joy and awe seizing upon her frame. "Leonard! Augustus! we faint beneath our heavy cross—beloved ones, we faint, we fall! But lo! the crosses are human wings; we mount—we—!" and the head sank, irradiated with a celestial beauty, upon the shoulder of Lucretia.

Ursula Mordant died in one of the great hospitals of the metropolis, and was buried in the burial-ground attached to it.

Leonard travelled as only those travel when life and death are in the scale. Mere death—a death of peace for this poor tortured spirit—he did not dread; but the foreboding angel within his breast whispered that more sad things than death waited to be revealed; and such foreboding voices are only too often the voices of truth.

Lucretia informed Leonard of the spirit's release; and gradually, when the broken heart could endure the sadder truth, communicated the following details:—

Late, one lovely June evening, she, Mary, and little Cuthbert, were returning from a stroll in the fields, when, beneath the hedge of a lane, she perceived in the dusk the figure of a woman lying upon the bank. Suddenly foreboding evil, Lucretia sent on quickly Mary with Cuthbert, fearful lest the child's lively imagination should be excited or distressed. The woman had evidently fainted, and from her grasping a small knife in her hand, and from blood oozing through her dress, Lucretia instantly divined that she had attempted to destroy herself. Of course, as always occurs in such cases, neither Mary encountered a policeman to send to Lucretia's aid, nor yet did a policeman's anxiously-desired figure saunter up the lane. To Lucretia it appeared ages before any assistance arrived, and to leave the woman she did not dare. At length, a young man, evidently returning from painting in the open air, with his sketching materials slung around him, came in sight. Lucretia hailed him as a friend in need. Leaving his picture and paint-box behind him, at full speed he set off up the lane for help, returning, in an almost incredibly short time, with a doctor and a couple of policemen. The woman appeared seriously, although not dangerously, to have injured herself; but from her strange and incoherent speech upon returning to consciousness, her unhappy condition was evident to all. She was conveyed to an hospital, attended by Lucretia and by our friend John Wetherley, again brought into contact with Ursula Mordant by one of those singular fatalities which occur much oftener in life than the novel-reader is willing to grant. John Wetherley, when he called the next day upon Lucretia Gaywood, to offer his co-operation with her in any way for the alleviation of the poor unfortunate's misery, related the circumstance of his having, as a child, encountered a mad woman in the woods above a beautiful old place in Nottinghamshire—the Hellings. The discovery made by the two, John and Lucretia, that Nottinghamshire was the native county of both, became, together with mutual reminiscences of the neighbourhood—Clifton Grove, and Wilford, and the River Trent—quite a bond of extraordinary sympathy between the new acquaintances. And a yet stronger sympathy arose when Lucretia discovered, by glancing again at his card, the name, having been misread by her at the first moment, that he was the painter of the "Paul and Virginia," the beautiful picture hanging at the side of Leonard's "Balder." And John then related various circumstances regarding his early history, and spoke of the Pierrpoints' noble conduct towards him, in a manner which altogether charmed Lucretia.

"I fancy we shall like Mr. Wetherley very much, Mary," said Lucretia; "and that he would like poor Leonard greatly; for he has long been—for years, he says—following in the footsteps of the painter of Balder. 'Everywhere have the memory and achievements of this clever artist risen up before me like a beacon from afar, urging me on to greater industry and success,' were his words. Nay—is it not strange?—I have promised that they shall meet at our house upon Leonard's return. But how strange that insanity should bring about his acquaintance with Leonard—how certain spheres seem to unite people, however remotely. Poor Leonard must never know of this origin of our acquaintance; and in all our intercourse with Mr. Wetherley let us most scrupulously preserve poor Leonard's incognito. Let us never refer to Leonard as having a connexion with Nottingham. And yet I cannot but regret concealment."

Still greater surprise awaited Lucretia when, upon her visit that day to the hospital, by the incoherent speech of the suffering woman, she discovered her to be the widow of Mordant and the mother of Leonard. A great and solemn change suddenly showed itself in the dying woman: and Lucretia, communicating her knowledge of the truth to no one but Mary and Andrew, wrote to Leonard, as we have seen.

How Mrs. Mordant had escaped from the asylum, and how

she had travelled up to London, always remained a mystery. The belief in her son's existence seemed gradually to have dawned upon her mind after poor Leonard's miserable interview, and to seek for him through the world had become her ruling idea. It was supposed that, in pursuance of this idea, she had wandered up to London. There were laid in her coffin various scraps of childish paintings of flowers and a

little needle-book, which she had appeared, in her insanity, to have treasured beneath her pillow, forgetting their existence in the clearness of vision before her death. John Wetherley, hearing of this singular circumstance, gave his explanation. Little, as he assisted in raising the bleeding woman from the bank, did he imagine that his childish drawings and Honoria's needle-book were concealed among her garments.

SEVRES PORCELAIN.

SEVRES porcelain has, for nearly a century, maintained a world-wide celebrity. To possess specimens of this, or of Dresden China, has been frequently the highest ambition of wealthy, but tasteless, curiosity-hunters. It was the costliness and rarity of these works, rather than their beauty, which so frequently excited the hopes and fears of the fashionable attendants upon the auctioneer's hammer; and if we follow these specimens of the potter's skill to their destination, it is generally to find them grouped with the rude and uncouth deformities of the Celestial empire.

Royal manufactories of porcelain exist at Berlin, Dresden, and Sévres; the latter was established in the reign of Louis XV., and, probably, owes its origin to the whim of some court favourite. Be that as it may, under the fostering and intelligent care of the French government, it became, either from necessity or policy, a scientific school for the improvement and perfecting of the ceramic art—in fact a model school for manufacturers in plastic materials.

The first attempt at establishing this manufacture was made in 1738 at the Chateau de Vincennes, and in 1755 it was removed to Sévres. The establishment comprises a museum, and an *experimental* and a *model* school, the combined aim of which is to attain the highest excellence both of form and materials. The first object, that of excellence of form, is promoted by the museum, which contains not only an extensive collection of the best classic models, but also specimens of every known variety of pottery and porcelain of the past and present ages. Samples of the earths, clays, pigments, and other materials which enter into their composition and decoration, with specimens of vessels in every stage of manufacture, and others exhibiting the various accidents to which they are liable in *firing*, glazing, &c., are arranged with the best effect to facilitate study.

The object of the experimental department is to attain the greatest perfection of *material*, by suitable combinations of different clays and other substances, materials for glazing, &c. This is accomplished by the employment of the highest scientific skill. It is due to the credit of M. Brogniart, the eminent geologist, to state that the greatest perfection of this manufacture has been attained since the establishment came under his able superintendence.*

The result of all the experiments made in this great laboratory are available by other manufacturers, to whom every information is liberally imparted. But notwithstanding the same materials are used and similar processes followed, Sévres porcelain is of finer quality than that of any other manufactory in France. Yet, although its products are sold at very high prices, and are constantly and extensively in demand, they do not repay the cost of supporting the establishment, which is partly maintained from the civil list.

The original manufacture of Sévres porcelain was of a very delicate and friable nature, in fact a kind of glass, termed *porcelaine tendre*, differing vastly in composition and appearance from that now made, which is termed *porcelaine dure*, or hard porcelain. These early productions were impressed with the false taste of the court of Louis XV., in which every feeling for art was distorted and perverted by affectation and a love of the singular rather than of the beautiful. Gaudy decoration, unmeaning and excessive ornament, disfigure these works, so that it becomes a matter of congratulation that they

* The present chemist to the royal manufactory of Sévres is M. Salvétat.

were composed in so tender and friable a manner as to be little likely to withstand the shocks of many years' exposure to accident. The *porcelaine dure* is, however, of a very different quality; here we find the greatest known perfection of material combined with the choicest and purest artistic forms. The most refined scientific ability, united with pure taste and skilful workmanship, contributes to the production of these elegant works, which may truly serve as models, not only to the manufacturers of France, but to those of our own and other countries. And there can be little doubt that much of the improvement observable of late years in our fictile manufactures, is due to the productions of the ateliers of Sévres no less than to the genius of Wedgwood and Flaxman.

Many of our readers may be scarcely aware of the coarseness of the materials of which the beautiful works in Sévres porcelain are composed. The common flint, calcined or burnt flint, felspar, Limoges clay, and calcined bone, are the principal ingredients employed. These are levigated or ground in water by means of powerful mills; the finer particles float in the water, which passes into large settling vessels, where they are allowed to subside; while the grosser particles fall to the bottom of the mill, again to undergo the grinding action of the stone. By this means a beautifully fine and plastic clay is produced, which the skilful workman moulds into every variety of shape and form. Next comes the modeller, who, from drawings, has to build up in clay the exact representation of the article to be formed in porcelain. After the clay has been modelled, cast, and fired, the skill of the artist is brought into requisition, who, by the use of the various oxides of gold, copper, iron, manganese, cobalt, &c., adorns the surface of the vase with the choicest productions of the painter's art. The bright gold of the finished vase enters the kiln as a brown colour, and the azure bright of the cobalt cannot be distinguished in the chocolate copper of its oxide. When the vase has passed through the fiery ordeal of the kiln, and come out unscathed, it is passed into the hands of the burnishers, who, with their agate tools, give lustre to the gilded parts.

The productions in Sévres ware are, as our engraving shows, ornamental rather than useful, hence they may properly be regarded as works of art. Vases, tazzas, chalices, &c. display pure classic forms, rarely disturbed by reliefs (the overloading with which is the common fault of works of this class, executed in an inartistic spirit); but when they do occur they always possess merit, and not unfrequently exhibit a rare degree of excellence. The painting is the work of artists of high qualifications, nearly 100 of whom are constantly employed at the manufactory. The subjects are infinitely varied—landscapes, figures, flowers, together with ornamental forms, and are of the greatest excellence, which our engraving exhibits as far as is attainable. In all these respects the manufactures of Sévres maintain a great superiority over those produced at another royal manufactory—that of Dresden, which appears to have never emancipated itself from the trammels that encompassed it at the time of its zenith of prosperity, the tinsel age of Louis XV. The characteristic features of the productions of Dresden are contorted forms and affected prettiness; while the ornamentation is overloaded and excessively elaborated in its imitations, or rather *copyings*, of natural forms and objects. The colouring is generally gaudy, chiefly for want of proper harmony of contrast, as the objects imitated are, individually, carefully studied from nature.